

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. **(twice amended)** A method for parallel approval of an electronic document by a plurality of users, comprising the steps of:

A) generating an original Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC 0", linked to the electronic document;

B) making the electronic document available to each user of said plurality of users; and

C) having each user of said plurality of users parallelly approve said electronic document, by for approval by each user, performing the sub-steps of:

i) opening the electronic document for approval;

ii) retrieving DAC 0;

iii) said user approving the electronic document by generating approval information;

iv) generating for the electronic document an approval Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC x";

v) comparing DAC x to DAC 0, and proceeding with the approval only if DAC x is equal to DAC 0; and

vi) storing said approval information in a user Approval Data Packet, hereinafter referred to as "ADP x".

2. **(original)** The method of claim 1, further comprising an additional step of:

D) incorporating the approval information from each ADP x into the electronic document.

3. **(original)** The method of claim 2, wherein step D) comprises the sub-steps of:

i) copying the electronic document into an insertion electronic document;

ii) retrieving DAC 0; and

iii) for each ADP x, performing the sub-steps of:

a) opening ADP x;

b) retrieving DAC x;

c) comparing DAC x to DAC 0, and proceeding only if DAC x is equal to DAC 0;

d) inserting approval information stored in ADP x into the insertion electronic document; and

e) generating a new Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC 0' ", linked to the insertion electronic document.

4. **(original)** The method of claim 3, wherein sub-step D) iii) d) comprises including the approval information at a pre-targeted location in the insertion electronic document.
5. **(original)** The method of claim 2, wherein step D) comprises the sub-steps of:
 - i) opening the electronic document;
 - ii) for each ADP x, performing the sub-steps of:
 - a) opening ADP x;
 - b) inserting approval information stored in ADP x into the electronic document, thereby generating a modified electronic document ; and
 - c) generating a new Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC 0' ", linked to the modified electronic document.
6. **(original)** The method of claim 5, wherein the inserting of sub-step D) iii) d) comprises including the approval information at a pre-targeted location in the electronic document.
7. **(original)** The method of claim 1, wherein sub-step C) vi) comprises encrypting ADP x.
8. **(original)** The method of claim 1, wherein step A) comprises encrypting DAC 0.
9. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 1, wherein, ~~in substep C) vi), the approval information comprises DAC x~~ comprises storing DAC x in ADP x.
10. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 1, wherein, in substep C) ~~vi)~~ iii), the approval information comprises a signature of the user.
11. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 1, wherein, in substep C) ~~vi)~~ iii), the approval information comprises biometric information related to the user.
12. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 1, wherein, in substep C) ~~vi)~~ iii), the approval information comprises a date and a time at which substep C) iii) was executed.
13. **(twice amended)** A method for parallel approval of an electronic document by a plurality of users, comprising the steps of:
 - A) generating an original Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC 0", linked to the electronic document;
 - B) making the electronic document available to each user of said plurality of users;
 - C) ~~for approval by each user,~~ having each user of said plurality of users parallelly approve said electronic document, by performing the substeps of:
 - i) opening the electronic document for approval;
 - ii) each user approving the electronic document by generating approval information;
 - iii) generating for the electronic document an approval Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC x";

iv) storing said approval information in a user Approval Data Packet, hereinafter referred to as "ADP x"; and

D) ~~for~~ authenticating the approval by each user, by performing for each DAC x the sub-steps of:

i) retrieving DAC 0 and DAC x; and

ii) comparing DAC x to DAC 0, and accepting the approval only if DAC x is equal to DAC 0.

14. **(original)** The method of claim 13, further comprising the steps of:

E) inserting approval information stored in ADP x for each user into the electronic document, thereby generating a modified electronic document ; and

F) generating a new Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC 0", linked to the modified electronic document.

15. **(original)** The method of claim 13, wherein sub-step C) iv) comprises encrypting ADP x.

16. **(original)** The method of claim 13, wherein step A) comprises encrypting DAC 0.

17. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 13, wherein, ~~in~~ sub-step C) iv), ~~the approval information comprises DAC x~~ comprises storing DAC x in ADP x.

18. **(original)** The method of claim 13, wherein, in sub-step C) iv), the approval information comprises a signature of the user.

19. **(original)** The method of claim 13, wherein, in sub-step C) iv), the approval information comprises biometric information related to the user.

20. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 13, wherein, in sub-step C) ~~iv)~~ ii), the approval information comprises a date and a time at which sub-step C) ii) was executed.

21. **(twice amended)** A method for parallel approval of sections of an electronic document by a plurality of users, the method comprising the steps of:

A) generating for each section of the electronic document an original section Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC_s 0", linked to said section of the electronic document;

B) making the electronic document available to each user of said plurality of users; and

C) ~~for approval by each user of~~ having each user of said plurality of users parallelly approve corresponding sections of the electronic document, by performing the sub-steps of:

i) opening the electronic document for approval;

ii) selecting the corresponding sections for approval;

- iii) retrieving each of the $DAC_s 0$ linked to the corresponding sections of the electronic document;
 - iv) each user approving the corresponding sections of the electronic document by generating approval information;
 - v) generating for each corresponding sections a section approval Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as " $DAC_s x$ ";
 - vi) comparing the $DAC_s x$ to the corresponding $DAC_s 0$, and proceeding with the approval only if in each case $DAC_s x$ is equal to $DAC_s 0$; and
 - vii) storing said approval information in a user Approval Data Packet, hereinafter referred to as "ADPx".
22. **(original)** The method of claim 21, further comprising an additional step of: D) incorporating the approval information from each ADP x into the electronic document.
23. **(original)** The method of claim 22, wherein step D) comprises, for each ADP x, performing the sub-steps of:
- i) opening the ADP x
 - ii) selecting and opening a target section of the electronic document wherein the approval information is to be inserted;
 - iii) retrieving the $DAC_s 0$ and $DAC_s x$ corresponding to said target section;
 - iv) comparing $DAC_s x$ to $DAC_s 0$, and proceeding only if $DAC_s x$ is equal to $DAC_s 0$;
 - v) inserting approval information stored in ADP x into the target section of the electronic document, thereby generating a modified section of the electronic document ; and
 - vi) generating a new section Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as " $DAC_s 0$ ", linked to the modified electronic document.
24. **(original)** The method of claim 23, wherein the inserting of sub-step D) v) comprises including the approval information at a pre-targeted location in the target section of the electronic document.
25. **(original)** The method of claim 22, wherein step D) comprises, for each ADP x, performing the sub-steps of:
- i) opening the ADP x
 - ii) selecting and opening a target section of the electronic document wherein the approval information is to be inserted;

iii) inserting approval information stored in ADP x into the target section of the electronic document, thereby generating a modified section of the electronic document; and

iv) generating a new section Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC_s 0", linked to the modified electronic document.

26. **(original)** The method of claim 25, wherein the inserting of sub-step D) iii) comprises including the approval information at a pre-targeted location in the target section of the electronic document.

27. **(original)** The method of claim 21, wherein sub-step C) vii) comprises encrypting ADP x.

28. **(original)** The method of claim 21, wherein step A) comprises encrypting each DAC_s 0.

29. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 21, wherein, ~~in sub-step C) vii), the approval information comprises DAC_s x~~ comprises storing DAC_s x in ADP x.

30. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 21, wherein, in sub-step C) ~~vii)~~ iv), the approval information comprises a signature of the user.

31. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 21, wherein, in sub-step C) ~~vii)~~ iv), the approval information comprises biometric information related to the user.

32. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 21, wherein, in sub-step C) ~~vii)~~ iv), the approval information comprises a date and a time at which sub-step C) iv) was executed.

33. **(twice amended)** A method for parallel approval of sections of an electronic document by a plurality of users, each section being approved by a single user, the method comprising the steps of:

A) making the electronic document available to each user of said plurality of users; and

B) ~~for approval by each user of~~ having each user of said plurality of users parallelly approve a corresponding section of the electronic document, by performing the sub-steps of:

i) opening the electronic document for approval;

ii) selecting the corresponding section for approval;

iii) each user approving the corresponding section of the electronic document by generating approval information;

iv) generating for the corresponding section a section approval Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC_s x";

v) storing said approval information in a user Approval Data Packet, hereinafter referred to as "ADP x".

34. **(original)** The method of claim 33, wherein sub-step B) v) comprises encrypting ADP x.
35. **(original)** The method of claim 33, wherein sub-step B) iv) comprises encrypting DAC_s x.
36. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 33, wherein, ~~in~~ sub-step B) v), ~~the approval information comprises DAC_s x~~ comprises storing DAC_s x in ADP x.
37. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 33, wherein, in sub-step B) v) ~~iii)~~, the approval information comprises a signature of the user.
38. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 33, wherein, in sub-step B) v) ~~iii)~~, the approval information comprises biometric information related to the user.
39. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 33, wherein, in sub-step B) v) ~~iii)~~, the approval information comprises a date and a time at which sub-step B) iii) was executed.
40. **(thrice amended)** A method of merging a plurality of approved electronic documents or sections of a document into a single approved master document, the method comprising the steps of:
- A) approving the electronic documents by performing, for each of said electronic documents, the sub-steps of:
- i) generating an original Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as “DAC 0”, linked to the electronic document;
 - ii) having the electronic document made available to each user of a plurality of users;
 - iii) ~~for approval by each user, having said each user of a plurality of users approve~~ said electronic document by performing the sub-steps of:
 - a) opening the electronic document for approval;
 - b) each user approving the electronic document by generating approval information;
 - c) generating for the electronic document an approval Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as “DAC x”;
 - d) storing approval information in a user Approval Data Packet, hereinafter referred to as “ADP x”;
- B) generating the master document;
- C) generating a master Data Authentication Code and a master Approval Data Packet, respectively hereinafter referred to as “DACm 0”, and ADPm, both linked to said master document; and
- D) for merging of each electronic document, performing the sub-steps of:

- i) opening the electronic document;
- ii) retrieving the DAC 0 and DAC x linked to said electronic document;
- iii) comparing DAC x to DAC 0, and proceeding only if DAC x is equal to DAC 0;
- and
- iv) incorporating the electronic document into the master document;
- v) generating a new Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DACm 0" linked to the master document incorporating said electronic document; and
- vi) storing ADP x corresponding to said electronic document into ADPm.

41. **(original)** The method of claim 40, wherein:

- sub-step A) iii) c) comprises encrypting ADP x; and
- step C) comprises encrypting ADPm.

42. **(original)** The method of claim 40, wherein:

- sub-step A) i) comprises encrypting DAC 0; and
- step C) comprises encrypting DACm 0.

43. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 40, wherein, ~~in sub-step A) iii) d), the approval information comprises DAC x~~ comprises storing DAC x in ADP x.

44. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 40, wherein, in sub-step A) iii) ~~db~~, the approval information comprises a signature of the user.

45. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 40, wherein, in sub-step A) iii) ~~db~~, the approval information comprises biometric information related to the user.

46. **(currently amended)** The method of claim 40, wherein, in sub-step A) iii) ~~db~~, the approval information comprises a date and a time at which sub-step A) iii) b) was executed.